

BMCW BUZZ



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Second Quality Service Review Provides Comprehensive Assessment of BMCW Practice

From March 3–14, 2008, the BMCW underwent its second Quality Service Review (QSR). The first baseline review was conducted in the fall of 2006. The QSR is part of Wisconsin's Program Enhancement Plan completed for the federal Children and Family Service Review.

QSR is a qualitative review which drills down to what is really occurring in the case to understand what is working and why. It looks at the impact of services on the children and families receiving them and if the most appropriate and viable services are in place. This process is used in many other states, as well as throughout Wisconsin, to assess quality case management.

The activities of the QSR are comprehensive and included:

- In-depth reviews of 24 cases (185 interviews);
- Review of six adoption cases, which is the first time adoption cases were reviewed in a Wisconsin QSR;

- 33 focus groups with 227 participants;
- Debriefing on the findings of the case reviews;
- Feedback from case workers and supervisors;
- Identification of recurring patterns/lesson in cases;
- Written case summaries;
- Summation and discussion; and
- Action planning.

Focus groups involved those who interface with the BMCW, including court officials, birth and foster parents, service providers, health professionals, and many others.

The preliminary findings of the QSR were presented to staff who had family cases in the review sample on March 14 at the Italian Community Center. The full report will be presented at a later date.

Please see page 5.

Nidhi Khare: US Citizen

Nidhi Khare, Access supervisor, took the citizenship oath on January 23, 2008. Her colleagues at the Administration Office helped celebrate by decorating her office and sharing a cake decorated with a fUS lag.

Nidhi came to the US from New Delhi, India about 10 years ago to join her husband, Alok, who works at Northwestern Mutual. Nidhi worked for Innovative Family Partnerships for 6.5 years and has been a state employee for 2.5 years. She was previously a social worker in India.



From the Director

Spring Brings Renewal



After a long hard winter, spring is finally here. As the photo below of IA Social Worker Paul Spink shows, many of you braved bad weather and dangerous roads in your duties of investigating CPS reports, meeting with families, getting to court appointments, and checking on foster children. In March, we recognized the importance of the work you all do with National Social Worker Month. This is followed by two more months focusing on our work: Child Abuse Prevention Month in April and Foster Family Month in May.

Perhaps it is significant that these three months fall together in spring. Spring represents renewal and new life. As social workers, you are a catalyst for renewal in a family's life following a crisis that endangered their children. You help to bring about the change that can prevent abuse and neglect from recurring. You also act as the "nest maker" when settling a child into a new foster home.

Each day, difficult decisions are made about how to best ensure the safety of children and help parents develop their own capacity to keep their children safe. State standards guide practice, but ultimately decisions are made by case workers and their supervisors regarding how these standards are applied in our day-to-day work.

Often our work and responsibilities are misunderstood by the public. To help with this, BMCW will be conducting community education workshops under the Milwaukee Child Welfare Safety Plan. The goal of this is to help the community understand and the mission of BMCW to help families keep children safe and well, as well as to increase community ownership and involvement in our mission.

We hope this effort will improve the support and appreciation for the important work you do for children and families.

BMCW in the Community

CFCP Staff Cook for Families

On Friday, February 22, 2008, the Children's Family and Community Partnerships (CFCP) Diversity Committee served dinner to the residents of the Ronald McDonald House. The mission of the Ronald McDonald House is to "create a special home-away-from-home for families with children receiving treatment for life-threatening illnesses." Serving an evening dinner is an especially intimate way of creating that home-away-from-home atmosphere.

The Committee members enjoyed working together in the House's kitchen and dining area to prepare the meal for approximately 25 guests. The diners were very appreciative of having a home-cooked meal and many shared with servers the challenges they are facing with their children. One grandmother noted that her 7-month-old grandchild would be undergoing heart surgery the following day, and added that she was from the northern part of the state but chose Children's Hospital of Wisconsin because it is the "best" hospital.

Participating from CFCP were Marcus Martin, Sarah Padget, Chiquetta Patterson, Amy Graap, Andriana Serwa, Linda Hively, Alisha Hunt, Katherine Bauernfiend, Georgia Issac, Beth Garbe, and Candace Harrison.

The CFCP Diversity Committee's mission is to "foster the exploration and celebration of the many cultures to which we belong." CFCP staff were honored to be part of the special meal support provided by the House. If you would like information about participating in the House's dinner program, call 414-475-5333.

Neither rain, nor snow, nor dark of night ...



The schools were closed, non-essential city workers were told to stay home, and many folks didn't venture out all day, but the BMCW remained on duty during the February 6th blizzard to ensure the safety of children. Initial Assessment Social Worker Paul Spink clears the snow from his car at the Region 2 office.

Ensuring eligible families are enrolled in BadgerCare Plus

By Mark Ramion, Section Chief

On February 1, 2008, a new program for children and families in Wisconsin who need and want health insurance was inaugurated: BadgerCare Plus. This health care program offers access to comprehensive, affordable health care to working families and pregnant women in Wisconsin. Also, BadgerCare Plus is for all kids, regardless of income.

The health care benefits provided in the BadgerCare Plus program are available to:

- Qualifying birth parents of children in BMCW care;
- Caregiver relatives of children on CHIPS orders;
- Youth who have attained their 18th birthday on or after January 1, 2008, while in foster care, subsidized guardianship, or court-ordered kinship care; and
- Relatives caring for children in voluntary kinship placement if they meet certain BadgerCare Plus requirements.

BadgerCare Plus was designed to create one comprehensive health care program by consolidating family Medicaid, BadgerCare and Healthy Start. This program is designed to:

- Cover all kids
- Provide coverage and enhanced benefits for pregnant women
- Be consumer friendly
- Promote prevention and healthy behaviors

BMCW has formed a workgroup to outline the various procedures and processes needed to assure that children in BMCW care, as well as eligible caregivers and relatives, will be enrolled in this new health care initiative. Point persons have been identified from each of the regions as well as from private partner agencies. As a workgroup, we will identify various scenarios for coverage and develop the roles and responsibilities for workers and point persons to assure the smooth flow of BadgerCare Plus applications and other necessary forms.

To learn more about BadgerCare Plus visit <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/badgercareplus/index.htm>.

Strengthening Parents' Abilities to Protect Their Children

By the Special Forces Team

Since the Fall of 2006, the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (BMCW) has been implementing the Protective Capacities Family Assessment (PCFA), an integrated intervention that encompasses all program areas of the BMCW.



"The PCFA enhances confidence in decision-making around safety," stated OCM Jessica Hess and Jenell Loreck of the Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership for Professional Development (MCWPPD) at UWM.

The goals of the PCFA include early and active engagement of families in the case planning process and fostering a collaborative partnership for change. The process recognizes that the primary responsibility for keeping children safe lies with the parent. The goal of child protective services is to strengthen the parents' protective capacity. "PCFA both challenges and empowers families and BMCW staff to move from service compliance to collaborative change," according to Program Manager Kim Paige and OCM Supervisor Mike Kluesner

The PCFA "Special Forces" team completed a presentation to the judges at Children's Court in October 2007. The judges responded favorably and requested an expanded presentation for all Children's Court judges and attorneys.

The PCFA is a regular part of pre-service and foundation training for all BMCW staff. The Special Forces team, along with Matt Gebhart of MCWPPD, is available for ongoing consultation.

Please contact a representative from your agency with questions or concerns about the PCFA. They are:

Sandra Crafton (CFCP-OCM, Region 1),
 Charity Douglas (CFCP-OCM, Region 1a/2a)
 Andrea Eckel, Kelly Smith, Liza Herbst, Kim Paige, Michael Kluesner, Jessica Hess (CFCP-OCM, Region 2)
 Kenmikiya Terry, Andrea Uptgrow (CFCP-SS Region 2)
 Rebecca Jacobi (IA, Region 1)
 Mustafa Sabree (IA, Region 2),
 Jenell Loreck, Matt Gebhart (MCWPPD))
 Jennifer Wedward (CSSW)
 Cheryl Westfall, Rachel Hickling (La Causa—OCM)
 Lisa Slater, Penny McNeal (La Causa—SS)

From the Bench

Court Initiatives Help BMCW Improve Practice

By Judge Mary Triggiano
Presiding Judge
Milwaukee County
Children's Court



I believe child welfare and the courts have begun a new, deliberate and collaborative dialogue about how past child welfare and court practices conflict with current research and how together we might change practice to limit the harmful, unintended consequences to children. Here are a few examples:

Visitation: The BMCW and the courts were not focusing enough on our visitation plans, even though we had numerous studies showing that frequent, purposeful visits with parents and siblings contributes to successful placement and reunification and reduces the time to reunification. Children who receive more frequent visits have fewer problem behaviors.

After numerous brainstorming sessions, the BMCW is currently in the process of restructuring its visitation plan, working with the courts in the process. In addition, the BMCW is instituting a protective parental capacities blue print to guide the courts and others in maintaining the child's safety in the process.

Disposition orders: The judges, court personnel, and BMCW will soon begin to look closely at how to restructure our CHIPS dispositional orders to build on family strengths rather than burdening a parent with a plethora of conditions they cannot possibly meet. This order also will build on the protective capacity philosophy.

Women in recovery: The courts and the BMCW tend to place infants in foster care when their mothers are addressing substance abuse issues, even though research indicates that both may be better off together in the mother's recovery process. The judges have facilitated a work group including court personnel, child welfare, medical professionals, Metal House, legislators and others to discuss addressing the needs of women in treatment and their infants.

Improving the court process: Courts have become complex and often un-navigable to the lay person who may be dealing with very emotional and traumatic issues. Under the leadership of Chief Judge Kitty Brennan, we are looking for new ways to address family issues in our

courts through the Family and Children's Court Unification project, which expands on the Children's Court one judge—one family philosophy. The project's goal is to approach each case in a way that is less adversarial and instructive, while providing individualized services to families.

Child welfare and juvenile justice: We have an over representation of minority children in both our child welfare system and juvenile justice system. We also know that child abuse and neglect are associated with earlier onset of juvenile crime. Research shows that a history of abuse/neglect increases a juvenile's risk of arrest for a violent crime by 96%. We have convened meetings to develop a partnership between child welfare and juvenile justice to explore new ways to improve the lives of children and families.

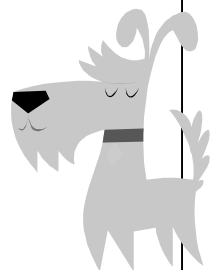
Working with MPS: Some of our children are not going to school; parents have difficulty navigating the school system; special needs are not being identified, and truancy is common. These issues impact the work we do on cases. The school board is funding an MPS liaison located at Children's Court to help bridge some of these gaps.

I encourage you to get involved in some of these projects and know that the safety and well being of children depends on the commitment of professionals and community members like all of you.

Practice Tip

Before entering a fenced yard, drag your keys along the fence. If there is a dog in the yard, this will get its attention so it doesn't surprise you.

- Access Social Worker Linda Knors



Briefs

The **Hergert Foundation** awarded 25 scholarships to youth aging out of foster care. The funds can be used to cover any school related expenses, such as books, computers, entrance exams, etc. The Foundation's "Get it Done Fund" will begin distributing funds soon. They are to be used to cover expenses of children entering foster care that are not covered through other funds.

The State has provided \$15,000 to each region for **Emergency Funds** as part of the Milwaukee Child Welfare Safety Plan. The funds will be used for the basic needs of families while the initial assessment is being completed. Staff will be informed on the process for accessing and the guidelines for using the funds once details have been worked out.

Kids Matter held its annual night for foster families at **Betty Brinn Children's Museum**. About 300 people attended the event, including BMCW Director Denise Revells Robinson, Judge Mary Triggiano, Representative Lena Taylor, Mayor Tom Barrett, and other dignitaries. Children had fun exploring the museum, listening to stories, and participating in workshops. Foster parents received an annual free museum membership.

In Memory of Katrina Reynolds

BMCW employees at the Administration Office were saddened by the unexpected death of a co-worker Katrina Reynolds, age 44, on February 16.

Katrina was a social worker in the BMCW's Access program. She worked for the BMCW since October 1, 1997, and was part of the "Class of 100," the first state BMCW social workers hired.

Katrina was quiet and unassuming. Office Associate Khandi Gibson said, "She was known to express sincerity through her voice that showed concern toward children who are being abused."

As a kind person with a warm friendly spirit, she had the type of laughter that was refreshing to the soul. She will be missed dearly."

Katrina was born and raised in Milwaukee. She was an active member of Progressive Church. One of three children, she was preceded in death last year by her brother. Katrina was very supportive of her mother.



QSR Results

Continued from page 1.

Among 26 strengths listed in the preliminary QSR report are:

- The new training teams and mentors are helping new staff develop skills.
- Guardianship as a permanency option is helping with permanency goals.
- Communication within the BMCW and other partners has improved;
- The Safety Service program is recognized by the community as valuable; and
- There is more attention to child visits with parents and siblings.

Among the challenges identified by the report is limited resources in the community, including:

- Affordable housing for families.

- Supervised visiting agencies that are in locations easily accessible to parents.
- Insufficient number of child psychiatrists.
- Difficulties locating mentors for children.
- A shortage of quality placement options.

Practice challenges identified include many things the BMCW has been working on, some of these are:

- Placement stability;
- Participation of providers at CST meetings;
- The involvement of fathers;
- The length of stay of youth in assessment homes; and
- A unified planning process between IA and Safety Services.

The final QSR will be available on the BMCW web site when it is released. An all-staff meeting will be held to review the results and to discuss plans regarding the BMCW's response and next steps.